



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
Milwaukee County
CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele Announces Budget Veto

MILWAUKEE – After working with Supervisors to find areas of compromise and reaching an agreement on the need for new revenue to ensure future sustainability, Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele today announced that he would veto just one of the County Board's 44 amendments to his 2017 Budget.

Similar to last year when the county executive accepted 66 of 68 amendments, this year he is accepting 43 of 44 amendments and asking the Board to only consider one amendment that makes significant cuts to the county executive's staff. This amendment would mean losing 3 of the 8 staff to the county executive.

The county executive is encouraged by the Board's work on implementing a \$30 vehicle registration fee, particularly the Board's suggestion to implement a taskforce to examine ways to make the VRF more progressive, and looks forward to the opportunity to partner on solutions. While he continues to agree with the assessments of the independently elected comptroller and the independent Public Policy Forum that a \$60 VRF is required to sustain County services and investments, the county executive believes the \$30 fee will put the County in a stronger, more sustainable position than we would be without it.

"I hope this will be the beginning of a true dialogue and partnership about how we can put the County on a more sustainable path through the use of a VRF, as well as lobbying for other options not currently available to the County," County Executive Chris Abele said. "With cuts to state and federal funding, the only way we can accomplish this is by working together."

The county executive is also accepting the Board's changes to the GO Pass program and more than \$2 million of new parks projects, however, he asked that the Board continue the discussion on how to ensure we can invest in parks and other priorities sustainably. New sources of revenue are required to continue making these types of investments. The Finance Committee had some creative discussion about new sources of revenue, and the county executive is hopeful that these

conversations can continue in the coming months so that we can continue to invest in our award-winning Parks system.

The only amendment, out of a total 44 amendments, that the county executive is vetoing cuts the County Executive's Office staff by \$188,150, or approximately three of eight staff members.

Including the county executive, the Office of the County Executive has nine full time employees, the same number as when County Executive Abele took office and the lowest number in the last 20 years. Over the past five years the county executive has worked hard to freeze his budget and get rid of any unnecessary costs. All departments have had to make difficult decisions in light of our fiscal constraints and so has the County Executive's Office. For example, the county executive got rid of the office vehicle and eliminated County cell phones for County Executive's Office employees.

While the number of employees has stayed frozen, the dollar amount of the budget for the County Executive's Office has increased over the past five years, as have the budgets for other small departments such as the treasurer, register of deeds, corporation counsel, county clerk, and other offices. Because departments like the County Executive's Office are small and the budget is made up almost exclusively with salary dollars (i.e., not a lot in services/commodities/other expenses), maintaining a flat budget is not possible without cuts to employees. That is why these small departments have been cost-to-continue budgets -- they are not able to absorb year-to-year inflationary increases like larger departments can.

Chairman Lipscomb has requested significant changes to the County Board's budget, including changes to fringe benefits, crosscharges and the transfer of a position to the County Clerk. The county executive is accepting every amendment that the County Board has requested for its own budget, and is asking for the same consideration of his office budget.

"Engaging with supervisors on key issues and improving collaboration and communication has been a key priority for my staff over the past year, and it is a key priority for me moving forward," County Executive Abele said. "I believe the significant increase in outreach from my office to supervisors is a big part of the reason we were able to find so much common ground in this budget, and will be an important component to our mutual efforts to lobby the state together on issues such as making the VRF more equitable."

The County Executive's budget veto statement can be viewed [here](#).

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